

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING & TRANSPORT COMMITTEE - 19 MARCH 2018

QUESTION NO. 5 in accordance with Standing Order No.36

Zahid Aziz to ask the Chair of Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport Committee:

Reviewing Bottlenecks in Caversham

Assuming that the timeframe for a 3rd Thames Bridge is some years away, would the Lead Councillor commit to reviewing these three key bottlenecks in the Caversham area:

i) The traffic lights and their phasing at the junction of Church Street at Caversham Bridge, which could definitely be improved;

ii) The carriageway width on Caversham bridge itself, where widening the carriageway slightly by narrowing the footpaths to allow more space for larger vehicles, buses and lorries would improve traffic flow considerably (I understand a school bus was involved in a collision on the bridge yesterday and a teacher was injured from the shattering glass - case in point);

iii) The mini Roundabout on Hemdean Road at Oakley Road which many people feel is an accident waiting to happen - you can't see the junction of Rotherfield Way until you're actually encroaching the roundabout.

REPLY by the Chair of the Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport Committee (Councillor Debs Absolom):

I invite Councillor Page, the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport to make the response on my behalf.

REPLY by the Lead Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport (Councillor Page):

I thank Mr Aziz for his questions. I will take each one in turn:

1. The junction of Church Street with Church Road and Bridge Street in Caversham is managed through a central computer that takes into account the wider road network. The system will always look to maximise traffic flow whilst taking into account the impact on other junctions. There is a bias to Bridge Street and Church Street as opposed to Church Road and St. Peters Hill. This is to manage the knock-on effect across a much wider area of central Caversham and the Inner Distribution Road. The central management system will also take into account the exit blocking that occurs regularly at this junction, with traffic at times becoming heavy and slow through the junction due to lack of road capacity in

central Caversham and on Caversham Bridge. So, it is not so much a bottle neck at the junction itself but limitations of the wider road network, particularly Church Street, that impacts traffic flow through this junction.

2. Caversham Bridge was built in the 1920s and the abutments are not designed to carry the weight of vehicular traffic. The footways are actually voids that carry utilities (gas, electric, water, telephone etc) across the bridge. Furthermore, the highway narrows on the Caversham side with buildings right up against the back of the footpath thus significantly limiting the opportunity to reduce footway widths. Consequently, reducing the footways and widening the carriageway is not possible.
3. The mini-roundabout at the junction of Hemdean Road and Oakley Road was introduced as a road safety measure. Drivers are expected to slow and give-way at the junction in the same way as at any other roundabout. When the junction is negotiated by drivers correctly it is perfectly safe, but I will ask officers to keep the junction under review through the annual road safety programme.